



Columbus City Attorney **Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr.**

eNewsletter

Volume 7, Issue 1

May 2017



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A Word from City Attorney Pfeiffer

With a little more than six months to go before I retire after more than four decades of public service, including the last 35 years as an elected official, I can't help but reflect upon what it means to be a public servant. It doesn't always entail laying out some grandiose vision. More often than not, being a public servant means waking up every morning with the mindset to do something meaningful and worthwhile to have a positive impact on people's lives.

I'm honored to have a staff who do their best to embody the true spirit of public service. In that vein, I'm pleased to announce that our [Zone Initiative](#) attorneys—who are assigned to the five police zones in the city, and whose offices I describe as being the streets of Columbus because their primary task is to be in neighborhoods, listening to the community and looking for ways to fix problems—has caught the attention of [10TV](#) as *Crime Tracker 10* investigative reporters [Angela An](#) and [Maureen Kocot](#) are doing a week-long series that tracks the data and documents what we are doing to help shut down drug houses, crime-plagued hotels, human trafficking, irresponsible businesses, code violators and negligent property owners.



10TV's Angela An interviews City Attorney Pfeiffer about his career in public service as well as the neighborhood Zone Initiative he created in 2008. The series airs the week of May 8-12.

In this e-newsletter issue, you'll be able to read about what may end up being the last episode in our "Moseying" neighborhood documentary video series as we explore the Hilltop (although, I'm sure I'll still be moseying wherever the wandering spirit may lead me even after moving on from public life). You'll also learn about our partnership with the Ohio Attorney General's Office and local hospitals in our on-going efforts to help reduce and prevent domestic violence.

Finally I would like to acknowledge one of the more rewarding, if not bittersweet, aspects of the City Attorney's job: helping cultivate and develop talented professionals who grow in their roles to the point where other agencies and employers come calling for their services. I would to thank the following staff members for their work on behalf of the residents of Columbus and wish them well in their new endeavors as assistant city prosecutor Sally Smetzer joins the Ohio Attorney General's Environmental Section, assistant city prosecutor Garrison Carr becomes [Hilliard](#) City Prosecutor and victim advocates Amber Howell and Kendra Wiechart join [The Ohio State University](#) as Title IX Investigators.

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One Last Mosey

In what could be the last of his patented “moseys” before riding off into the sunset, Columbus City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr. released the latest installment of his neighborhood documentary video series.

The new episode of [“Moseying with Rick Pfeiffer: Exploring Columbus Neighborhoods”](#) features the Hilltop on Columbus’ west side and was shot last year during a time when City Attorney Pfeiffer was contemplating his own political mortality. After 35 years in public office, he ultimately decided not to seek reelection in 2017 and announced that he would retire at the end of his current term on December, 31, 2017.

“We hope these documentaries inspire others to get out and explore, to learn more about their community and to find common ground with their fellow residents.”

**Columbus City Attorney
Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr.**



City Attorney Pfeiffer talks with a fellow Vietnam veteran at the Glenwood Community Center on the Hilltop. Click on the above scene to begin watching the latest episode in City Attorney Pfeiffer’s neighborhood documentary series.

These ruminations seem to bring added weight to some of the more poignant moments of the documentary, as Pfeiffer visits several Hilltop landmarks, including Camp Chase Cemetery and the location of the former state mental institution.

City Attorney Pfeiffer initiated the Hilltop episode, which is the seventh chapter of the video series, at the invitation of Lisa Boggs, a long-time west side resident and community activist.

The Hilltop mosey also features Columbus School Board member and director of [Our Lady of Guadalupe Center](#) Ramona Reyes, [Greater Hilltop Area Commission](#) Chair Jay McCallister, [Friends of the Hilltop](#) operations manager Bill Huffman, [Ding-Ho Restaurant](#) owner Stephen Yee, [Glenwood Community Center](#) manager James Davis, and many others.

The Hilltop mosey is available [online](#). DVD copies also are available upon request.

Click on the below links to watch previous episodes that have highlighted:

- [Franklinton](#)
- [Parsons Avenue Corridor](#)
- [Cleveland Avenue Corridor](#)
- [Far East Side](#)
- [Hayden Run Corridor](#)
- [Clintonville - Part One](#) and [Part Two](#)



City Attorney Pfeiffer in front of the mural at Westgate Park. Click on the above scene to begin watching the latest episode in City Attorney Pfeiffer’s neighborhood documentary series.

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Partnering in the Fight Against Domestic Violence

Earlier this spring, City Attorney Pfeiffer kicked off a two-day multi-disciplinary conference attended by police, prosecutors, doctors, nurses, first responders and allied professionals, as part of a statewide effort to enhance the ability to detect, document and ultimately prevent one of the most lethal indicators of domestic violence and sexual assault.

The advanced training seminar, entitled “*Learn It. Share It. Do It. – Detecting, Investigating and Prosecuting Non-Fatal Strangulation*,” was hosted by the [Mount Carmel College of Nursing](#) in partnership with the Columbus City Attorney’s Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit, the [Ohio Attorney General’s Crime Victim Section](#), [OhioHealth Emergency Medical Services](#) and the [Forensic Nursing Network](#).

Strangulation affects all professionals working on sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking cases. It is one of the most lethal forms of domestic violence and sexual assault, as well as one of the strongest predictors for the subsequent homicide of victims of domestic violence.

The frequent lack of external injuries and the lack of medical training among domestic violence professionals have led to the minimization of this type of violence, exposing victims to potential serious health consequences, further violence, and even death.

Presenters were local and national experts, including members of the [Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention](#).

“We were pleased to bring in some of the nation’s leading experts to help us improve our service to victims of strangulation here locally and across Ohio,” said Anne Murray, director of the Columbus City Attorney’s Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit. “As a result of the advanced training I previously received on the topic, we revamped the way our office handles cases involving strangulation allegations.”

Murray, who secured grant funding through the State Victims Assistance Act (SVAA) to bring the Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention to Columbus, served as co-coordinator of the conference along with Sandy Huntzinger of the Ohio Attorney General’s Crime Victim Section, OhioHealth EMS program director Holly Herron, and forensic nurses Laura Kaiser of the [Mount Carmel Foundation](#) and Ruth Downing of the Forensic Nursing Network.

Attending the free event were prosecutors, law enforcement, and medical personnel including doctors, medics, and forensic nurses, as well as probation officers, victim advocates and counselors from across Ohio.

The conference was approved by the Supreme Court of Ohio’s Commission on Continuing Legal Education, allowing attorneys who attended to receive credit for CLE instruction. EMS and nursing continuing education credits also were granted to qualified participants.



Casey Gwinn, President/Co-Founder of the Alliance for HOPE International and former San Diego City Attorney with City Attorney Pfeiffer at the conference.

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After First Decline in Six Years, Thefts Continue Trending Downward

First quarter statistics for 2017 show that misdemeanor theft charges in Columbus are continuing to go down, after dropping for the first time in six years in 2016. The Columbus City Attorney's annual theft report for 2016, which was released earlier this year, revealed a host of decreases after setting record highs in several categories the previous year.

The City Attorney's Prosecution Division filed a total of 3625 theft charges last year, a decrease of 21 percent from the 4590 cases filed in 2015. The total value of merchandise stolen decreased almost 16 percent from \$695,000 in 2015 to \$587,000 in 2016. The number of first time offenders caught stealing also dropped significantly last year, plunging more than 23 percent from 875 in 2015 to 670 in 2016.

"We are encouraged by the number of decreases in the theft stats that we track, especially after hitting several peaks in 2015," said First Assistant City Prosecutor Bill R. Hedrick, who monitors and maintains the theft statistics on behalf of the office.

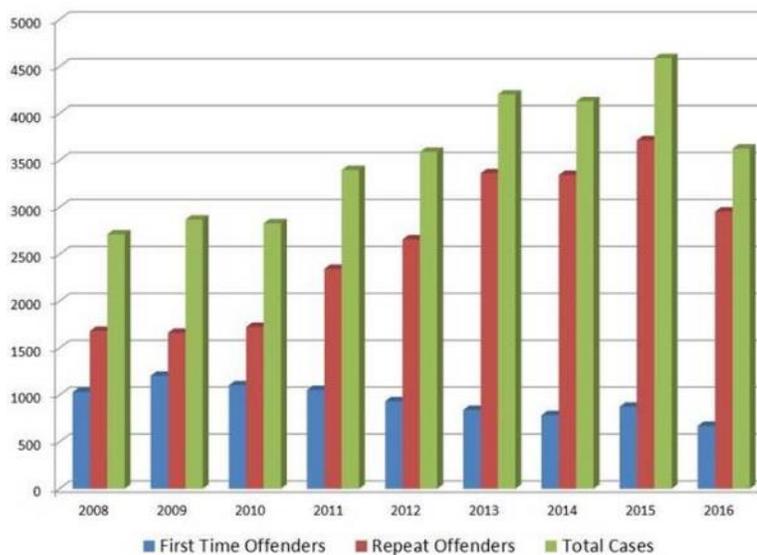
Another statistic that trended lower in 2016 was the number of cases involving large thefts over \$500. Since the Ohio Legislature raised the felony theft limit from \$500 to \$1000

in 2012, Columbus prosecutors had seen high dollar misdemeanor thefts more than double to an all-time high in 2015, until dropping 23.7 percent in 2016.

However, two other metrics actually *increased* last year—and prosecutors believe they are inter-related—as the average value of each theft grew from \$151 in 2015 to \$162 in 2016 and the percentage of cases filed against repeat offenders, also known as serial thieves and professional shoplifters, grew slightly larger from 80.9 percent in 2015 to 81.5 percent in 2016. Eight years ago, 58 percent of theft charges involved repeat offenders whereas over the last three years, roughly four out of five thefts were perpetrated by individuals with prior criminal records.

This year's first quarter stats indicate that 2016 may not have been an anomaly as there have been 31 percent less theft charges filed when compared to the same time period last year. There also have been 45 percent less arrest warrants issued for theft in 2017 when compared to the first quarter of 2016. However, just like last year, cases over \$500 have increased in the first quarter from 56 in 2016 to 62 in 2017 and the average value of each theft has spiked \$28 more per theft (from \$156 in the first quarter of 2016 to \$184 in 2017), a year-over-year increase of 18 percent.

Misdemeanor Theft Charges Filed 2008-2016 – Columbus, Ohio



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Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit Director Anne Murray received the [Ohio Crime Victim Justice Center's Outstanding Prosecutor](#) award. Anne is pictured holding her award with Chief City Prosecutor Lara Baker-Morrish and Legal Assistant Vanessa Perkins.



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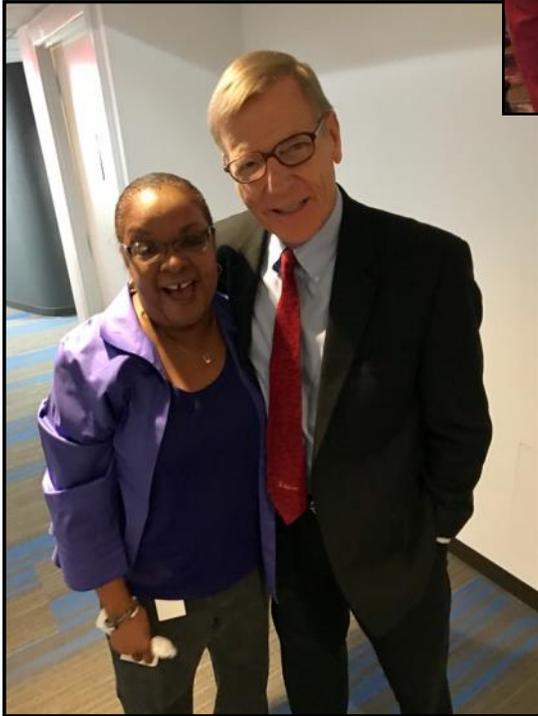
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City Attorney Pfeiffer ran into long-time friend Angela Pace while visiting the [10TV—WBNS](#) studios last month.



It must have been sweeps week as Chief of Staff Bill Hedrick teamed up with [ABC6—WSYX](#) investigative reporter Tom Sussi to catch some fugitives from justice.



Many may know Assistant City Attorney Bill Sperlazza (*front row, far left*) from his day job, but in his spare time he also helps coach the Linden-McKinley High School Lady Panthers basketball team. The team had another successful season with Coach Sperlazza helping guide the way.

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Assistant City Attorney Kristen Dickerson joined Columbus Police Commander Scott Hyland, community liaison officers Ryan Sigman and Brian Newsome, and community leaders Barbara Monk and Pam Weaver last month for a Westgate Block Watch Coordinators meeting.



Kristen talked about the [Zone Initiative](#) and reiterated our appreciation for the community's help in report housing issues and other illegal activity.

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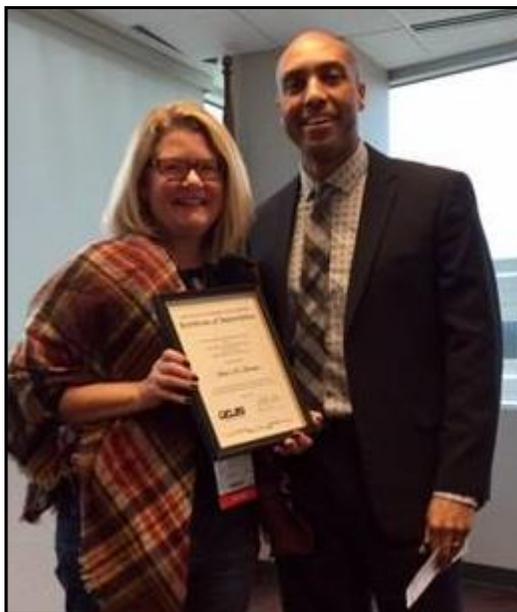
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Anne Murray, Director of our Domestic Violence & Stalking Unit received a certificate of appreciation from the [Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services](#) (OCJS) for her service as chair of the [Family Violence Prevention Center Advisory Council](#). Anne was presented the award by OCJS Director Karlhton Moore.

We were back in the studio filming our annual public service announcement as part of the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's](#) "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over" campaign.



Earlier this year, Anne Murray and Assistant City Prosecutor Mike Wander (pictured) conducted a two-day, 16-hour training session on domestic violence and stalking for 54 new police recruits.

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Legal Assistant Vanessa Perkins was a plenary speaker with Judge Paul Herbert about human trafficking and the CATCH court at the [End Violence Against Women International's](#) annual conference, where approximately 1800 people attended. Vanessa and Judge Herbert received a standing ovation at the end of their presentation.

Appellate Unit Director Melanie Tobias was a guest speaker at the [Columbus Bar Association Barrister Leadership Program](#), which helps young attorneys with five years of experience or less become leaders in the legal community.



Chief Police Legal Advisor Jeff Furbee (*left*) and Principal Assistant City Attorney Robert Tobias (*right*) addressed the Security Managers Information Network of Ohio last month.



Assistant City Attorney Bill Sperlazza presented at the [Ohio Crime Prevention Association's](#) annual crime prevention strategies conference about the use of Ohio's nuisance abatement laws to shut down problem bars, hotels, and other establishments.



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Meet the Staff

Abdiwahid “Abdi” Abdullahi, who has served as a legal intake counselor in the prosecution resources unit since 2002, is one of the more fascinating individuals one will meet in the Columbus City Attorney’s office. And that isn’t solely due to the fact that he is believed to be the only staff member, past or present, who has been in consideration to serve as prime minister of a country.

Growing up in his native Somalia, Abdi says he developed a fascination with the law and a love for science, especially chemistry and physics. While law and science may seem like two disparate fields, for Abdi they both embodied the notion that facts are important, that deep thinking provides a framework for understanding the world, and that laws govern our lives, whether they are the immutable laws of nature or the more malleable rules that regulate society.

Abdi ultimately chose the law for his formal education and upon graduating in 1985 with a *Laurea Degree* (Somalia’s laws and codes were Italian-based) from the Somali National University School of Law, he was assigned to serve as a state prosecuting attorney in the Banadir Regional Court. He prosecuted numerous criminal cases, including those involving the embezzlement of government funds.

He eventually transitioned to a new appointment that allowed him to blend his two lifelong interests when he was assigned to the Somali Ministry of Agriculture. Serving as general manager of the Northwest Agriculture Development project in Hargeysa, he managed a budget of \$35 million and oversaw nearly 400 employees all tasked with converting arid land into an irrigated farm system. Abdi also coordinated and chaired a joint ministerial committee comprised of the ministries of finance, agriculture, and planning, on a quarterly basis. He served in these capacities until 1991, when the government collapsed and Somalia descended into civil war.

Abdi, along with his wife and, at the time, four children applied for asylum in the United States. For the next eight years, while waiting for asylum, they lived in refugee camps in Kenya and Egypt. They eventually made it to Columbus, in part because of people they knew here, and as Abdi described it, “Columbus is less cold than Minneapolis.” They soon settled in and as their family grew to six children they integrated into the Central Ohio community. Abdi’s wife, Ayan Hassan, worked as a domestic violence victim advocate for ten years and recently opened a mental health clinic after earning her Master’s Degree in Social Work. They have one son at the Boston University School of Medicine, a daughter studying biology at Ohio State, and another son studying computer science, along with children in high school and middle school.

Sadly, the Somali civil war continues 26 years later and Abdi has lost his father and two of his brothers, one a military colonel and the other a medical doctor, to the violence. These tragedies only strengthen Abdi’s resolve as he is co-founder and vice president of the Hobyo Development Project, collaborating with the Galmudug Administrative Authority to develop Somalia’s coastal region. He also is founder, executive director, and project manager for Hadia Medical, in which he worked with his brother prior to his death to build and furnish a hospital in the city of Abudwak in the Galgaduud administrative region in central Somalia. In recognition of his former career and present efforts in his homeland, Abdi was offered the opportunity to serve as prime minister in 2014 and 2016, contingent upon national electoral outcomes.



Abdi Abdullahi

Title: *Legal Intake Counselor*

Education: *The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law, L.L.M.; Somali National University, School of Law; Dhusamareb H.S.*

Citizen Action

A Central Ohio man with an unusual nickname and an astounding 18 warrants for his arrest is the latest case study in a growing trend that prosecutors call “niche-market” shoplifting.

Twenty-five-year-old Justin Christian Daye of Columbus’ far east side was dubbed the “Red Bull Rapscallion” after being charged with stealing hundreds upon hundreds of cases of the popular energy drink worth close to \$5000 from retailers across the region. He is wanted on 16 total counts of theft, two counts of criminal trespassing, and one count of possessing drug abuse instruments.

Authorities continue to see niche market serial thieves specializing in stealing large quantities of very specific products according to First Assistant City Prosecutor Bill R. Hedrick, who has documented cases of individuals who strictly stole only *Crest White Strips*, *Downton Abbey* DVDs, *Dyson* vacuum cleaners, high-end faucets, pickup truck tailgates, hospital scrubs, and red meat.

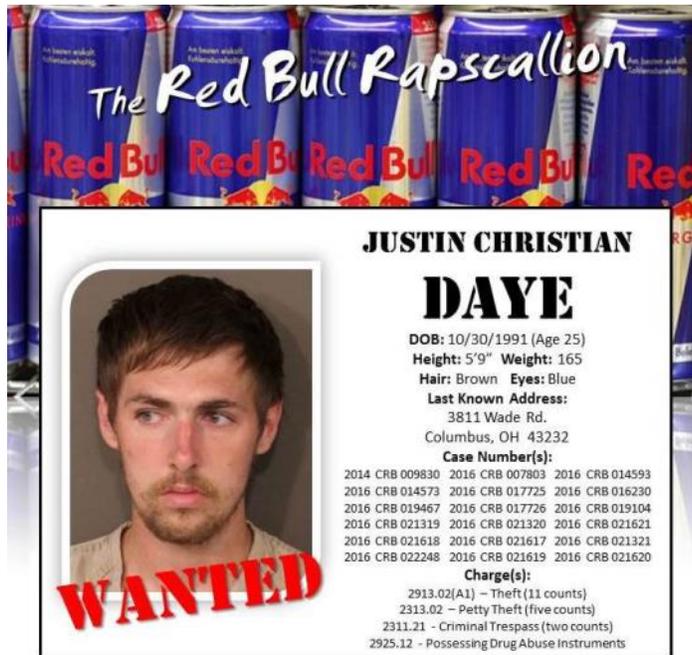
Last year, Daye went on a rampage for a little more than a month when he was literally “wiping out” entire shelves of *Red Bull* from area supermarkets, stealing as many as 61 cases in one particular instance. On one occasion, Daye’s attempt to steal “a cart-full of *Red Bull* and *Monster Energy Drink*” was thwarted, but he escaped and struck again at another nearby store about 15 minutes later, getting away with 31 cases of *Red Bull*.

Daye also is wanted in connection with three other thefts, including stealing \$342-worth of butane lighters from a Northland area supermarket, \$545-worth of “candy and beef jerky” from a Reynoldsburg area supermarket, and dozens of *Snickers* bars from a Gahanna area gas station.

“While Mr. Daye is definitely one of the more energetic thieves we’ve come across, we don’t believe he’s consuming hundreds of cans of *Red Bull* a week all on his own,” said Hedrick. “It’s likely that he’s part of an organized theft ring, although we can’t entirely rule out the possibility that he is a raging *Red Bull* junkie.”

Daye’s past criminal record includes charges of felony theft, receiving stolen property, breaking and entering, falsification with the purpose to commit theft, felony drug abuse, operating a vehicle without a license, and disorderly conduct.

Anyone with information on Justin Christian Daye is asked to contact First Assistant City Prosecutor Bill R. Hedrick at 614.645.8874 or brhedrick@columbus.gov. *Per state law, the Columbus City Attorney’s office prosecutes misdemeanor crimes, not felonies.*



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